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GRAND GUIGNOL: 5

STARMAN



ROBINSON
SNEJBJERG

FROM THE SHADE'S JOURNAL ...

I write this...no, it isn't me.
I see now that it hasn't been
me...

Not every time.

I see that now. The deeds that
were mine. The caprices and
killings. And the deeds that
were not.

The words that were mine...

...And the words and the
deeds and the killings
and the caprices...

...that were the work
of Culp...

Simon Culp.


Bonjour, mes amis...

I am Culp. These are my
words...me plans laid out
f'rall t'see.

It begun with the
gettin' o'me dark
powers. Aye, "old
Inky" I calls it.

It began in London.
London o'then.
1838.

What can I tell ya?...



...What can I say 'bout the
Londontown of '38?

A Villain's Tale

Grand Guignol • Cinquieme Partie

Robinson
writer
Williams
asst. editor

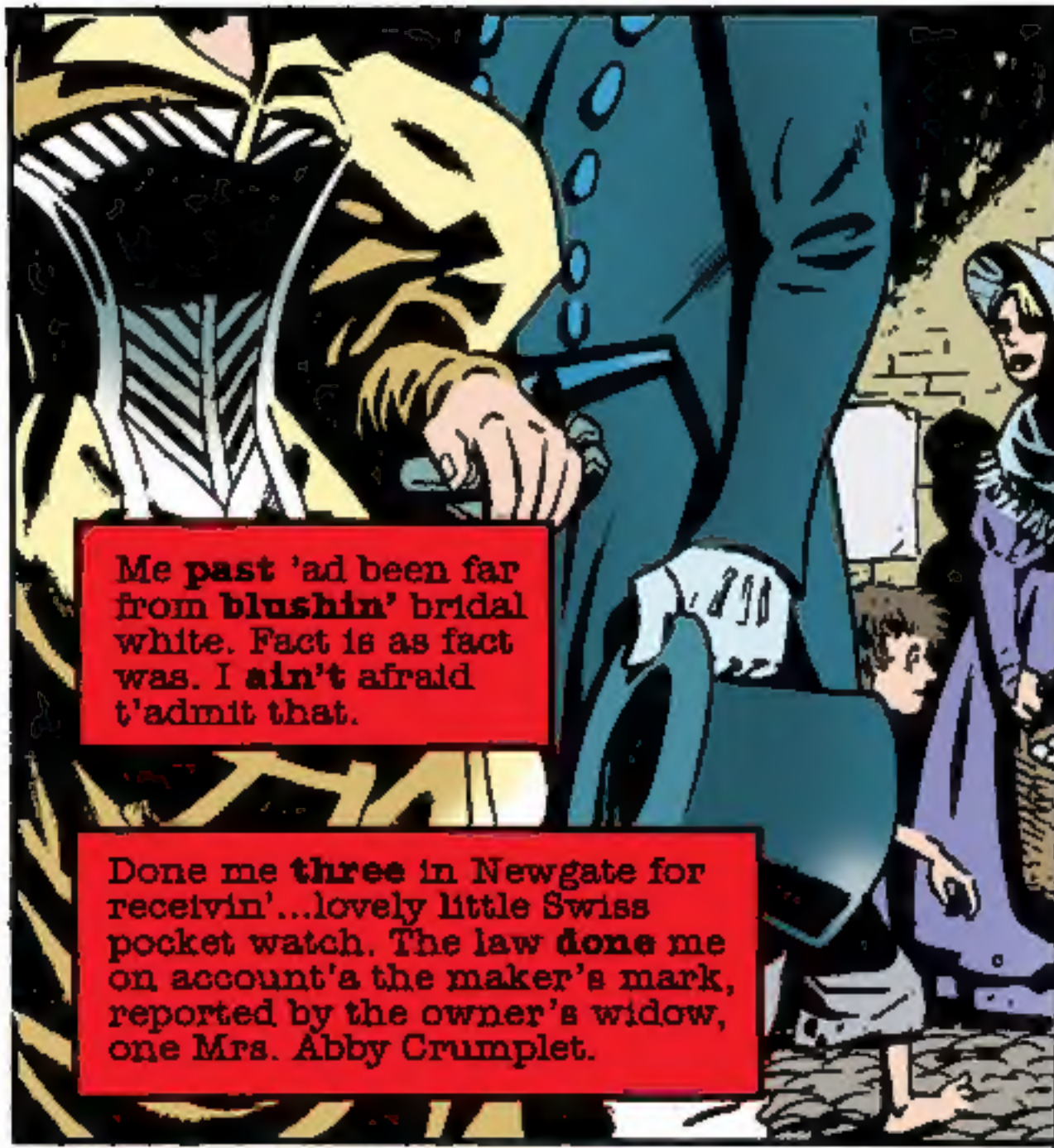
Snelbjerg
artist
Tornasi
editor

Oakley
letterer
Goodwin
guiding light

Wright
colorist

Jamison
separator

Jack Knight created
by Robinson & Harris



Me past 'ad been far from blushin' bridal white. Fact is as fact was. I ain't afraid t'admit that.

Done me **three** in Newgate for receivin'...lovely little Swiss pocket watch. The law done me on account'a the maker's mark, reported by the owner's widow, one Mrs. Abby Crumplet.

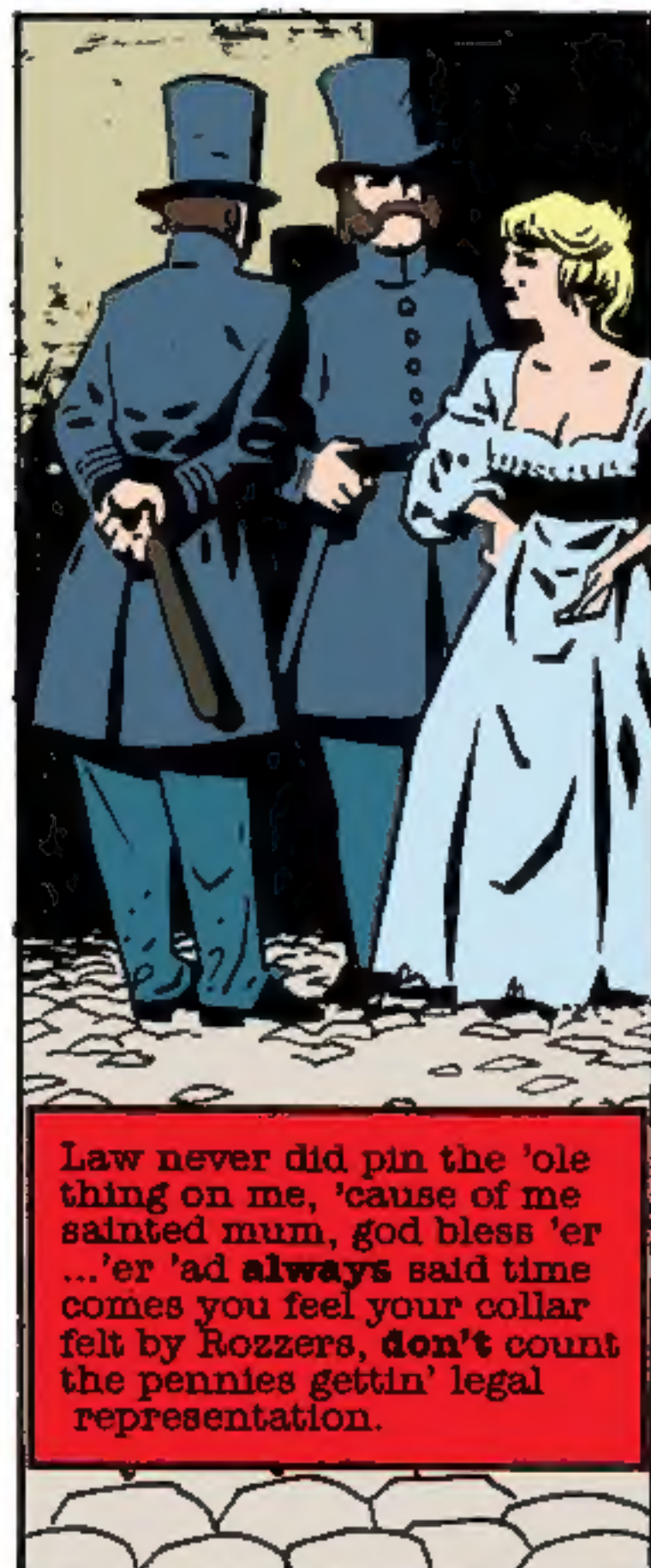


Watches was me **vice**...a dealer n'a collector, me. Not above takin' and walkin' I wasn't **neither**.

An' I was quite the **second-storyer** if'n I say so meself.



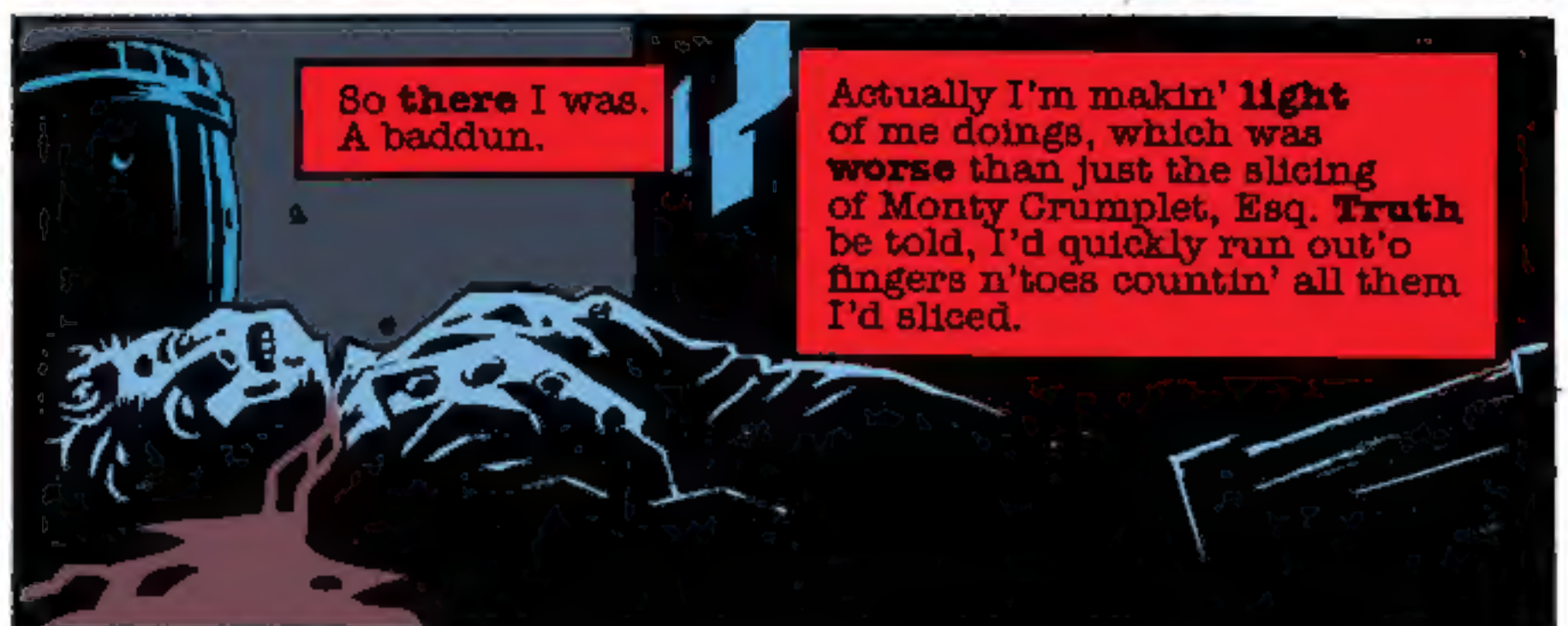
Love, a timepiece, me. Truth be, should'a **swung** ona'count ol' Montague Crumplet, the watch's owner, who I sliced a little n'sent to chat with the sprats in Thames water.



Law never did pin the 'ole thing on me, 'cause of me sainted mum, god bless 'er ...'er 'ad **always** said time comes you feel your collar felt by Rozzers, **don't** count the pennies gettin' legal representation.



If me old dad 'ad listened as 'ard at 'er, 'e might'aspared himself deportation t'Botany Bay, rum old sod that he was.



So **there** I was. A baddun.

Actually I'm makin' **light** of me doings, which was **worse** than just the slicing of Monty Crumplet, Esq. **Truth** be told, I'd quickly run out'o fingers n'toes countin' all them I'd sliced.



An' I was short in the **bone** department too. Got meself **cheated** when the gentleman upstairs **doled** out the body's bits and pieces.



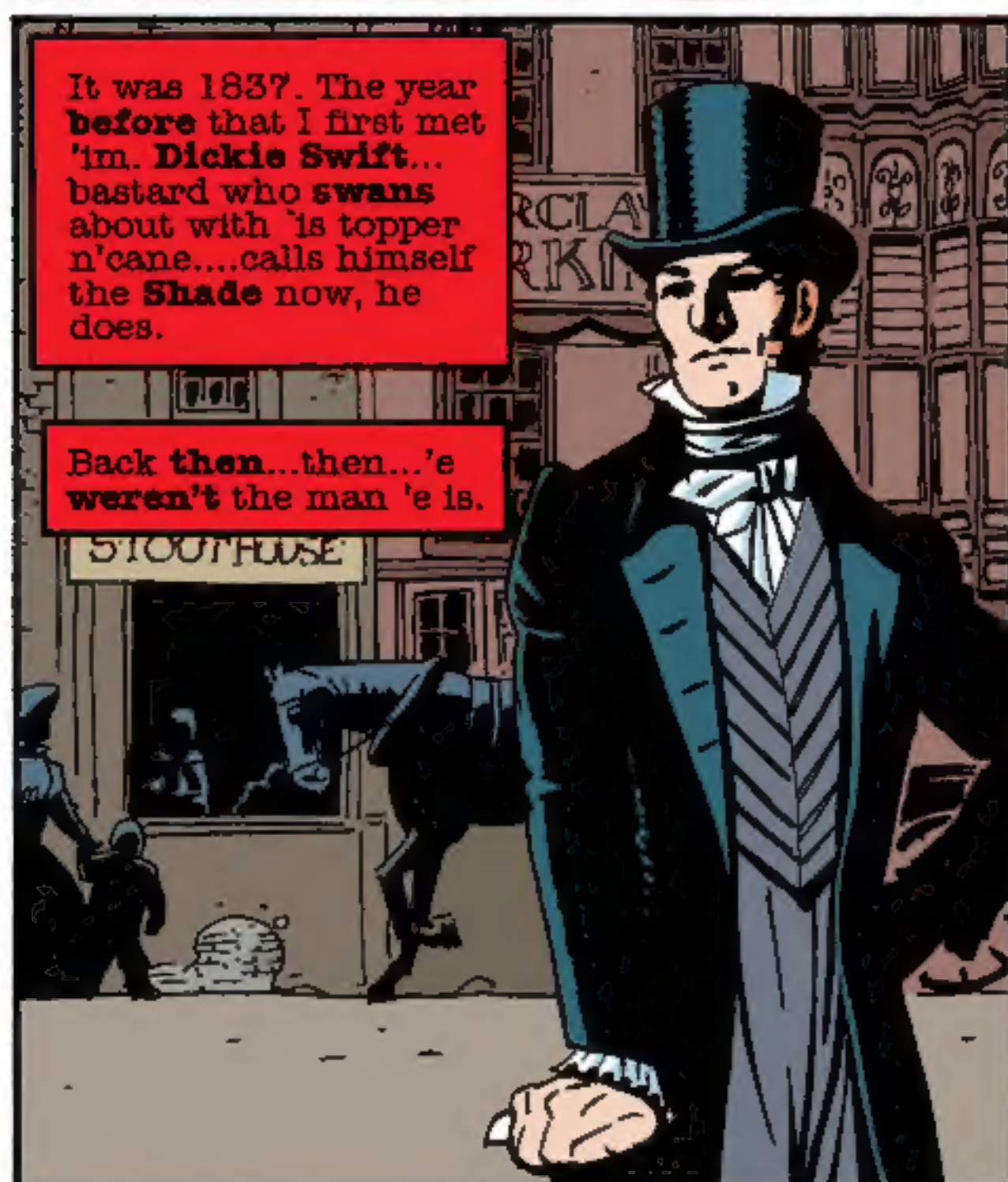
I'm a **dwarf**.



Not ashamed t'say.
Not ashamed t'be.
Not after the two
hundred odd years
I bin one.



N'odd years they bin.

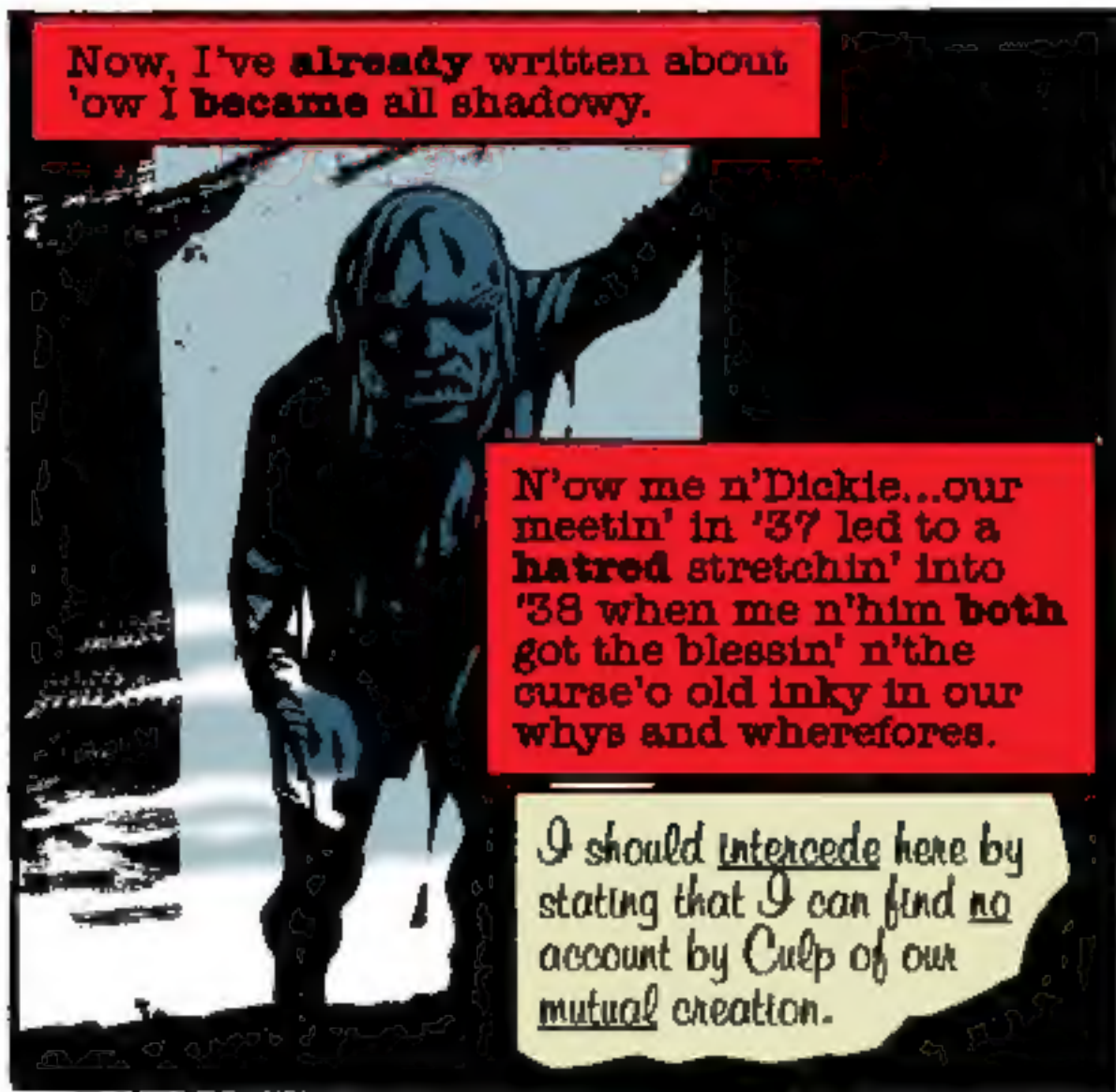


It was 1837. The year
before that I first met
'im. **Dickie** Swift...
bastard who **swans**
about with 'is topper
n'cane....calls himself
the **Shade** now, he
does.

Back **then**...then...**'e**
weren't the man **'e** is.



Close to, I ain't denying.
But not the dark cove **'e**
is in the 'ere and now.



Now, I've already written about 'ow I became all shadowy.

N'ow me n'Dickie...our meetin' in '37 led to a hatred stretchin' into '38 when me n'him both got the blessin' n'the curse'o old inky in our whys and wherefores.

I should intercede here by stating that I can find no account by Culp of our mutual creation.



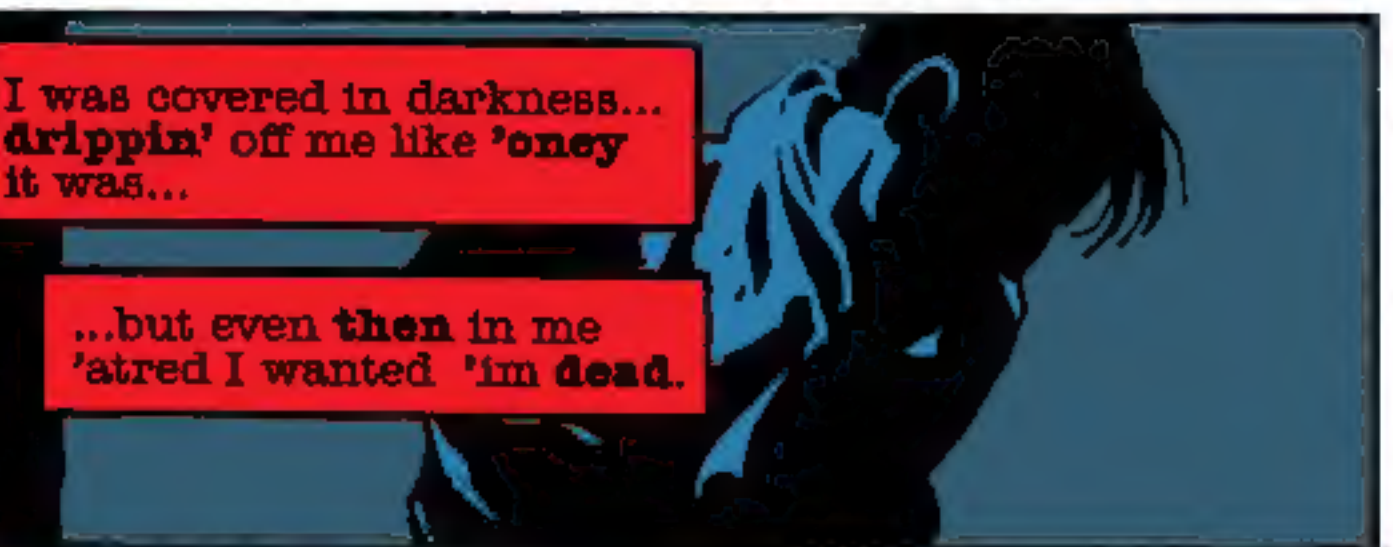
A fact I am mildly grateful for due to the many inaccuracies I am sure are present therein.

But afterwards ...moments afterwards I saw 'im.



I was covered in darkness... drippin' off me like 'oney it was...

...but even then in me 'atred I wanted 'im dead.



Even then I stumbled forward. More dead than alive, me...to try to make Dickie more dead than dead.



But a carriage come...



...and swift by name and nature, he was gone.

I'm curious 'ow Swift learned
of 'is shadow craft.

I wonder...

... 'Though I confess
that wonderin' never
cost me sleep.

Me...

...I was starvin'...desperate...
weak from me ordeals. N'after
the deaths of so many at the
time of me "shadowin'"...all
of 'em that I called me mates
was toes up...I was alone.

I saw the gent...dopey daft
'e was for not usin' a lamp-
lighter to get 'im from 'aven
to horse-carriage.

I angered at 'is
'avin' and me
wantin'.

The anger ignited the
flame within me.

Dark flames, they
were n'all.

The war o'dark that me n'Dickie
fought was fraught t'be sure.

But there was lulls, too. Time when life
n'fate or a recipe o'both or none at all
led to our lives driftin' far n'wideaway.

But when we fought
we fought 'ard.

1850 was the first of it.

India, back when the sun
never set onna part o'the
world didn't sport the Union
Jack 'igh n'mighty.

Me n'Dickie met by chance.

Both o'us was after a sultan's
fortune offered for savin' of 'is
daughter from a "Tiger Cult"
whatever such as they was.

We was both of us a tick's 'air
away from savin' the girlie...

(Though, I confess upon
seein' 'er all fair darkly
in the nearly altogether,
I mused upon tarryin'
with 'er a mite more'n
Dickie probably did.)

...Anyway, we saw each
other.

And we made the sun set
...as near as matters.
Tiger Cult didn't fare too
well in the crossfire, I can
tell you.

Sultan's daughter weren't
a winner, neither.



1866.

Me n'Dickie crossed our **angry** black swords next in **Vienna**.

The snow was **cold**. Didn't care much for the waltzes. But the pastries was **good** in the belly.

I was there guardin' a vacationin' archduke from n'assassin 'o'd been 'ired by an heir to the old cove's title.

Dickie was that assassin.

'im by now long **since** forsakin' the moral 'igh-ground he'd once strode all sprightly **nice**.

I **lost** me bounty.

Archduke lost 'is life.

Dickie walked away the **winner**.

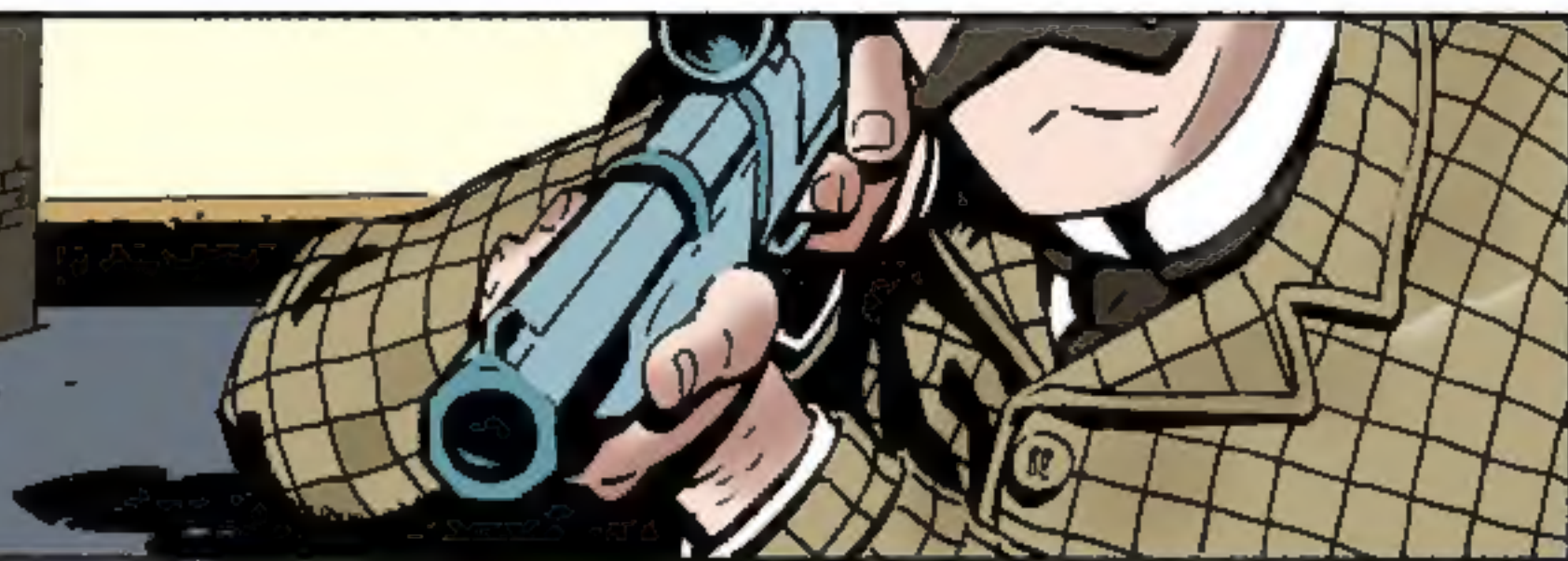
But **not** o'the war.



I didn't know a whole lot 'bout the Ludlows.

Then.

That'd **change**, o' course. But back then...what was I knowin' 'bout this 'n that 'n family vendettas?



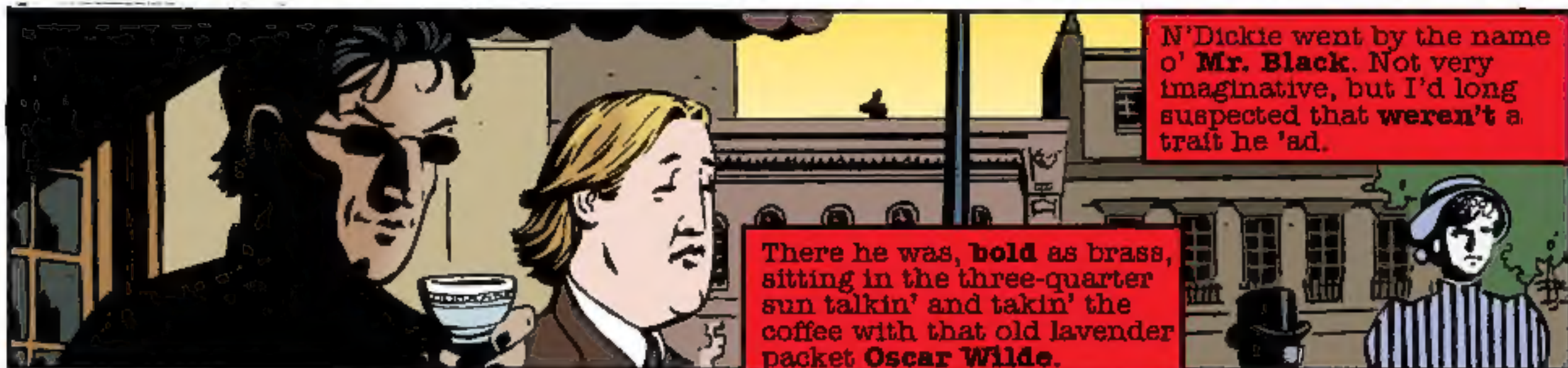
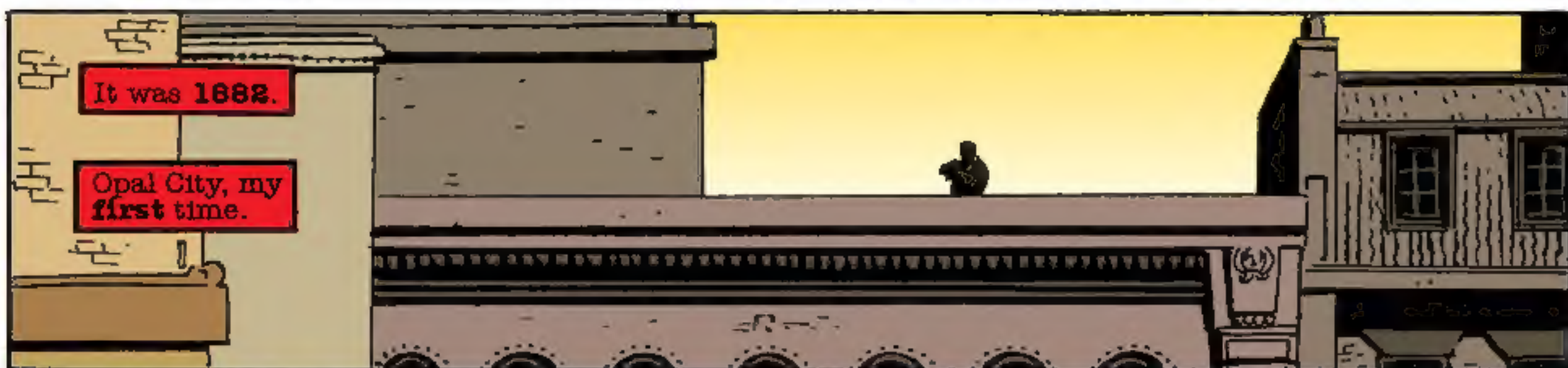
So, I was a bit **alarmed**, hearin' 'ow some cove name o' **Trimby Ludlow** planned to kill Dickie, 'fore I got the chance.

Trimby fancied 'imself quite the **marksman**.



It was **1882**.

Opal City, my **first** time.



N'Dickie went by the name o' **Mr. Black**. Not very imaginative, but I'd long suspected that weren't a trait he 'ad.

There he was, **bold** as brass, sitting in the three-quarter sun talkin' and takin' the coffee with that old lavender packet **Oscar Wilde**.

Some lad came up.

All very social.

N'all the while Trimby's finger **tightens** on 'is trigger.



Couldn't 'ave that now, **could** I?

BONJOUR.





I should **mention** an aspect o' my life by this point...

I **admit** that as I wandered the world, I became more n' more **dissatisfied** with 'ow I spoke me native tongue.

I 'adn't cared much one way or another when me life seemed **shackled** to the shadows o' Whitechapel and Tiger Bay, but as I **started** castin' me **own** shadows...

I saw that I was **lackin'**... and yet for **whatever** reason was unable to **alter** the way I spoke for the **better**.

It was visitin' **France** I realized that with a **new** language mine, I was **free** to shed me **lackin'**.

I learned French. I learned and learned. When I speak French I am a **gentleman**.

N'this I do, **unless** I'd made to do otherwise.

Oh, n'**one** other thing.

Lookin' **out** on Opal then, I saw **some'in'**.

No. That's **wrong**. Sensed it, me The **feelin'** that there was **more** to this place n' me n' Dickie n' everything.

The **feelin'** that I'd **return** 'ere and things would be 'owever fate said so.

Opal even **then** was a **different** place.

Calm n' yet crazy. Cruel n' kind.

The Opal City of 1882...



...what can I say about the Opal o'then?

The next meetin' o' ourn
was perhaps the most
meanin'ful.

Who'm I kiddin'...
'course it was.

London, 1941. N'oh,
the bombs did fall.

Dickie was all "for king n'
country" at the time. Very
unlike 'im...the man 'e now
was. (I should note that
by now Dickie was as much
a sticky wrong'un as me.
Could be the effect of old inky.
Could be 'e was a wrong'un
the whole time, but wore the
stiff, starched collar better'n
me.)



Anyways, Dickie was
fightin' a Hun monster...
horrible bleedin' thing.



He had 'elp. Flier. Yank flier
name'a Captain X of the
RAF. Colorful sort.



FOLLOW IT! DON'T
LOSE IT, SHADE!

THIS
WAY!

NO!



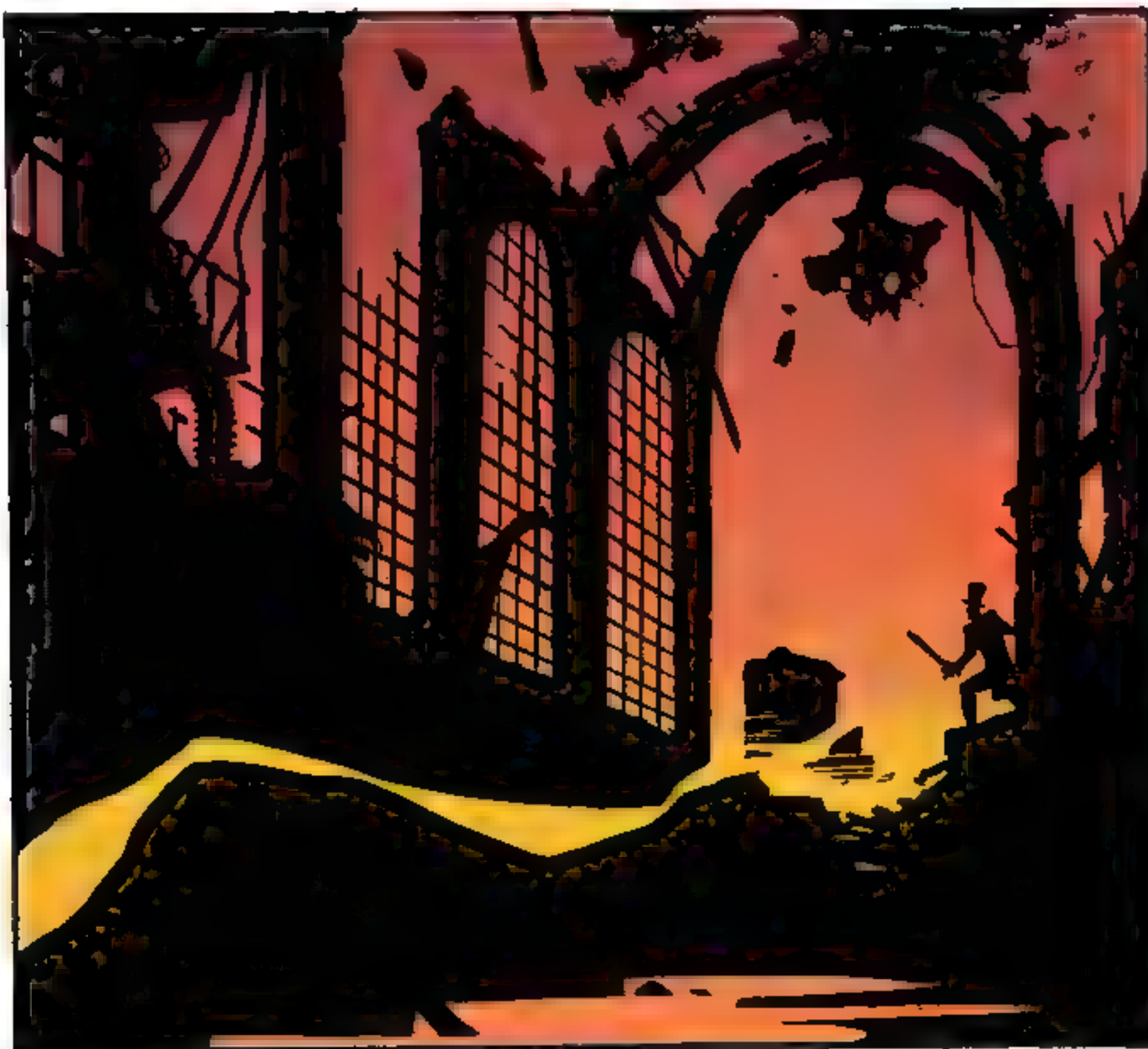
NO, THE
OTHER
WAY!

SPLIT UP, THEN... BACK HERE IN
FIVE, IF WE DON'T HAVE
GOOD LUCK!



I DON'T REGARD
COMING FACE-TO-FACE
WITH THAT MONSTER
ANY KIND OF LUCK
BUT BAD.





N'oh the bombs
did fall!

It was a while later
the Yank found Dickie.

SHADE!
ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT?

FINE.
FINE.

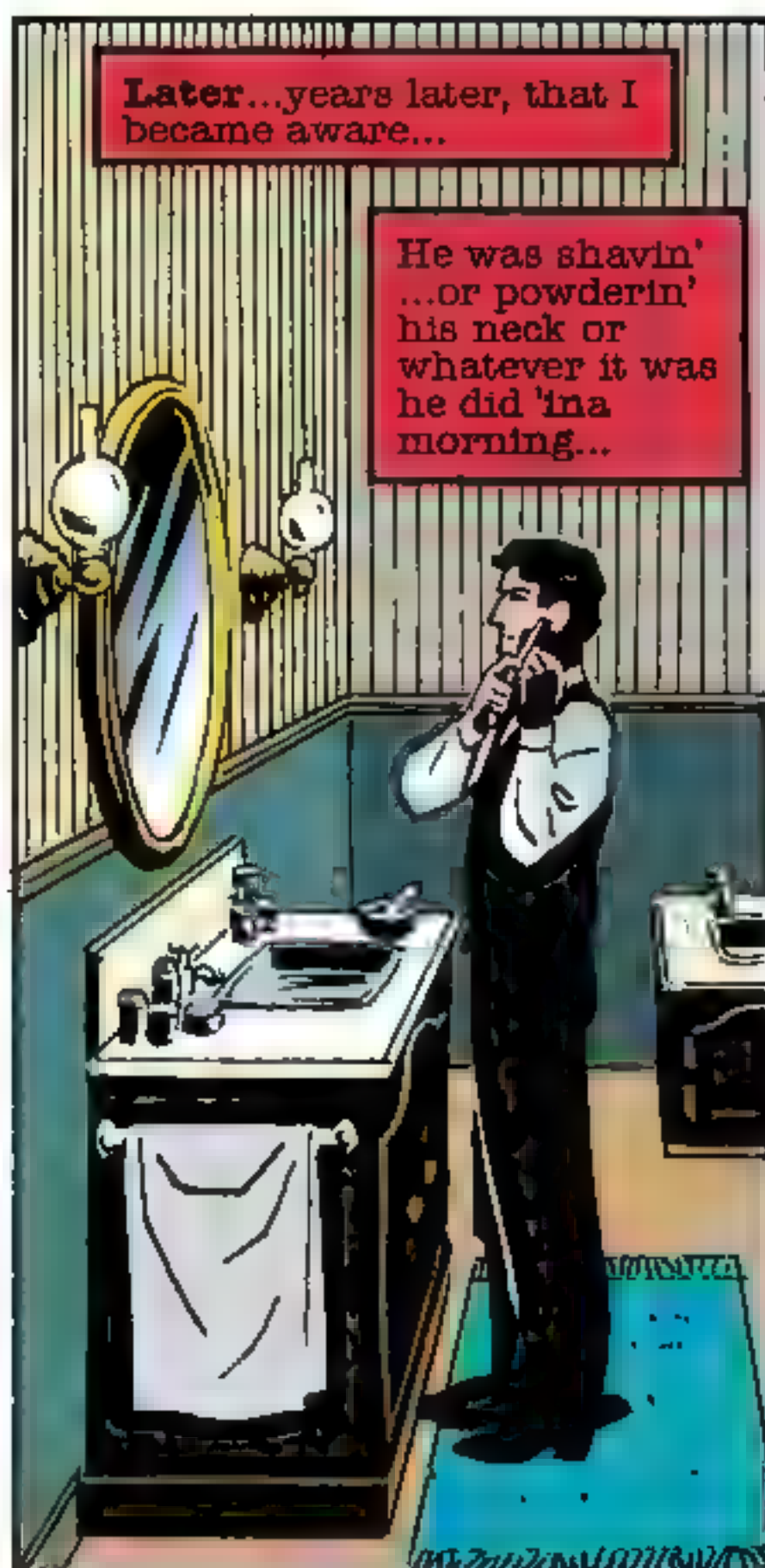
I... MY SHADOW
MUST HAVE--

I'M FINE.

GOOD,
BECAUSE
YOUR
SHADOW'S
NEEDED.

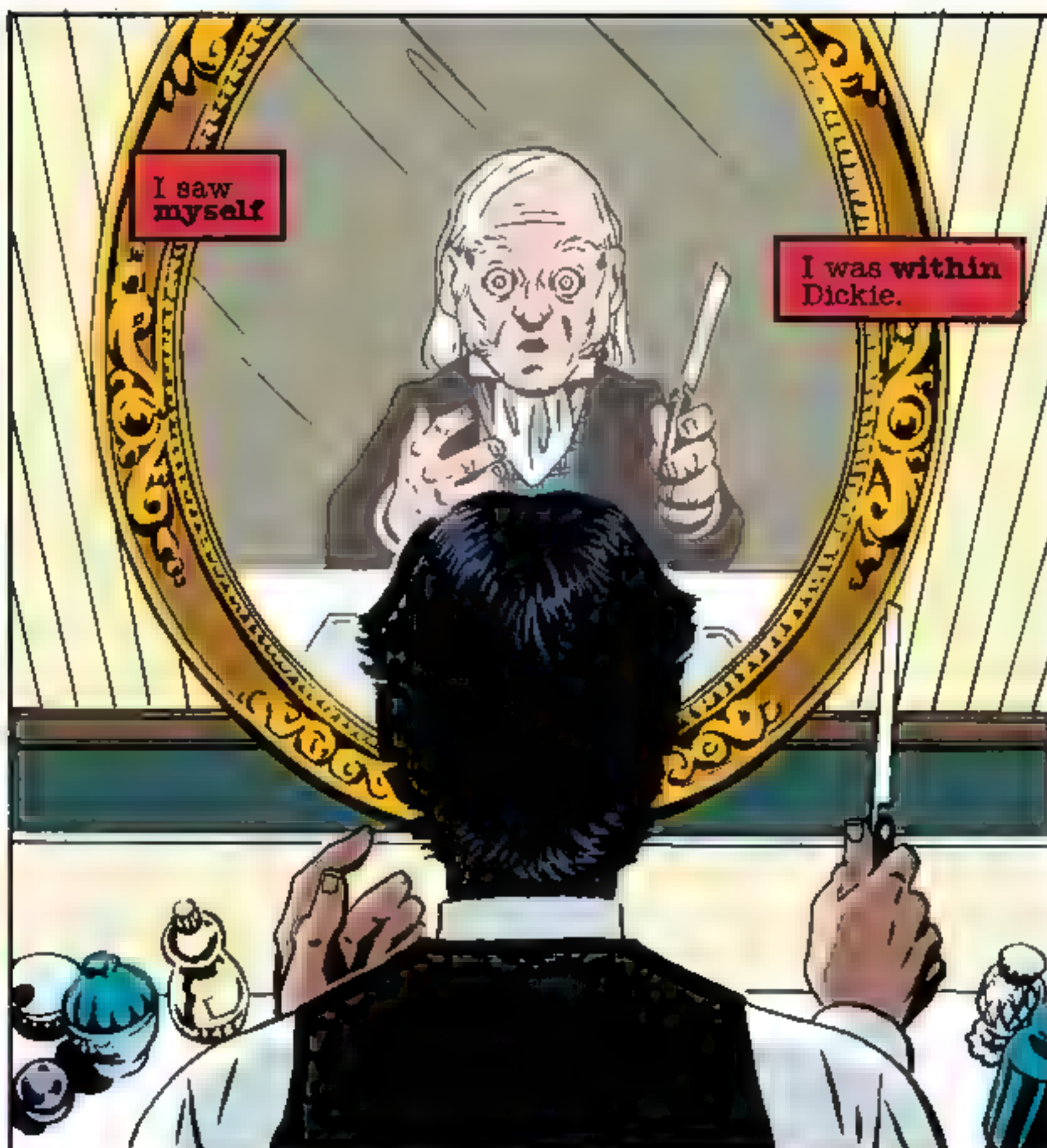
N'Dickie carried on as before
Fightin' the good fight.

It was only later .



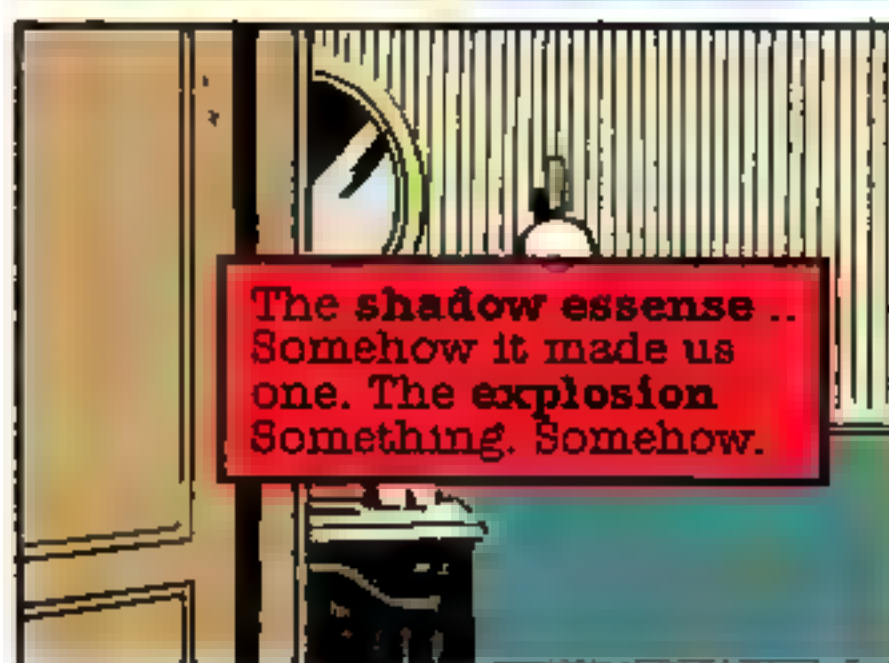
Later...years later, that I became aware...

He was shavin' ...or powderin' his neck or whatever it was he did 'ina morning...



I saw myself

I was within Dickie.



The shadow essence .. Somehow it made us one. The explosion Something. Somehow.



And when Dickie was tired...I mean ragged tired, the odd few times...



...I had his body to stroll around in.

FINI CIG

I'd have fun, then.



Fighting heroes .. the one with the winged hat I remember well...

I enjoyed the battle as much as Dickie did when he was himself...

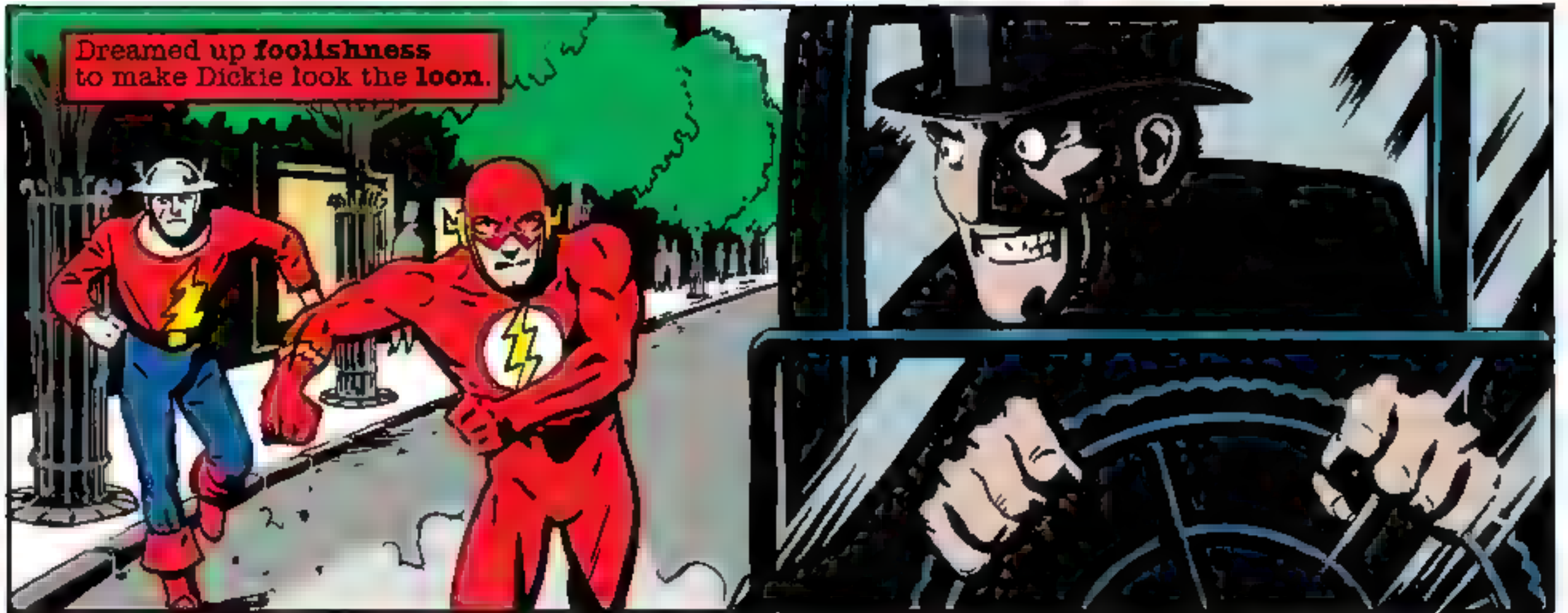


...but when I was in his form, I also enjoyed making Dickie look the fool and a darker rogue even than he was.

I recall one time I came to life...



...n' dreamed up a plan
to destroy the world.



Dreamed up foolishness
to make Dickie look the loon.



Other times again,
too. Me Evil old me



Now, I don't want you thinking **Dickie** a saint
Time was then I only
got to play now again...

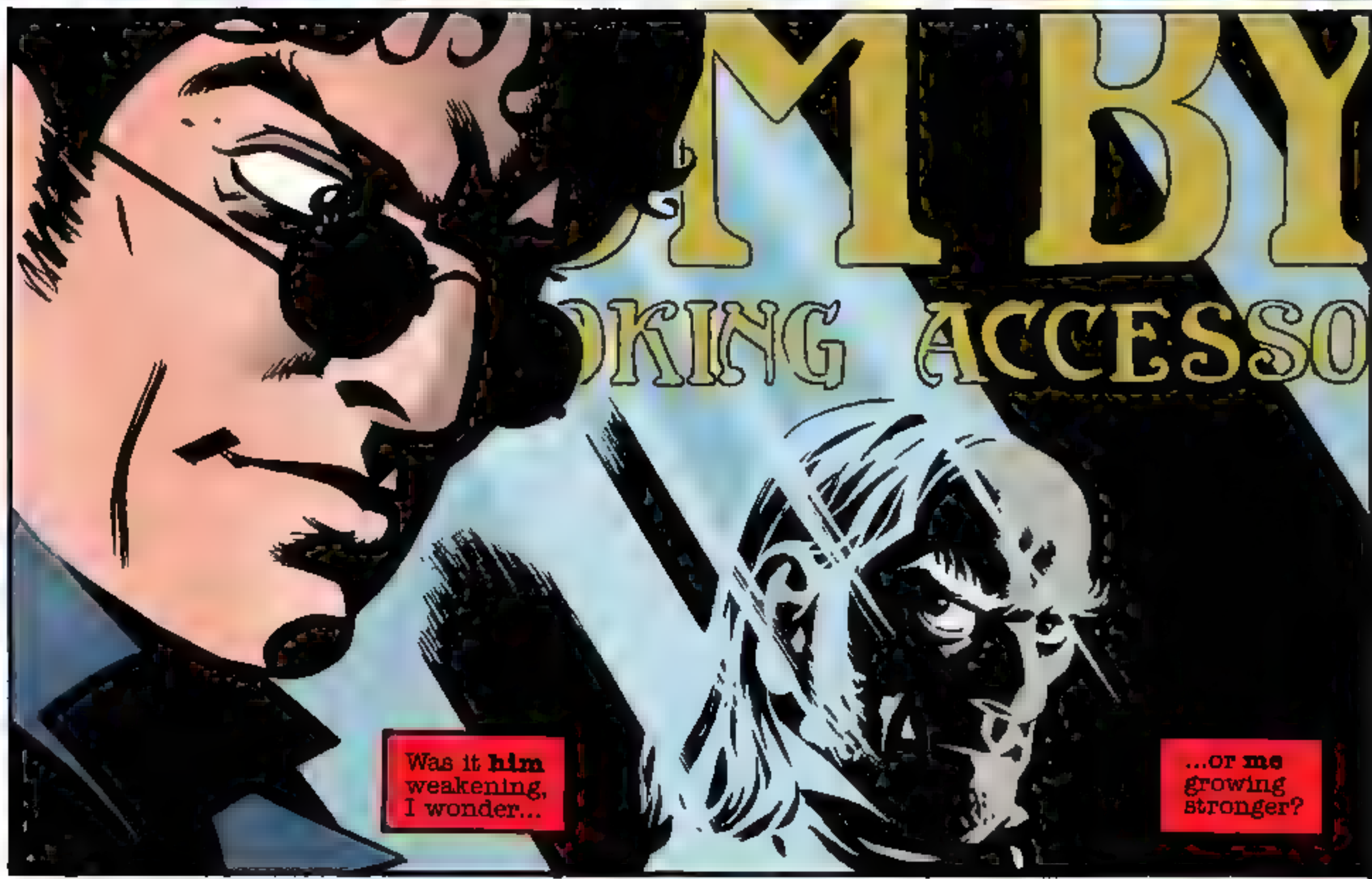
.. most o'**Dickie's**
wickedness was
his alone.



But then later still...
I got more control...

It was hard....

...but sometimes I'd
have days...even weeks
of time taking **Dickie's**
long strides one leg at
a time.



MIBY
OKING ACCESSO

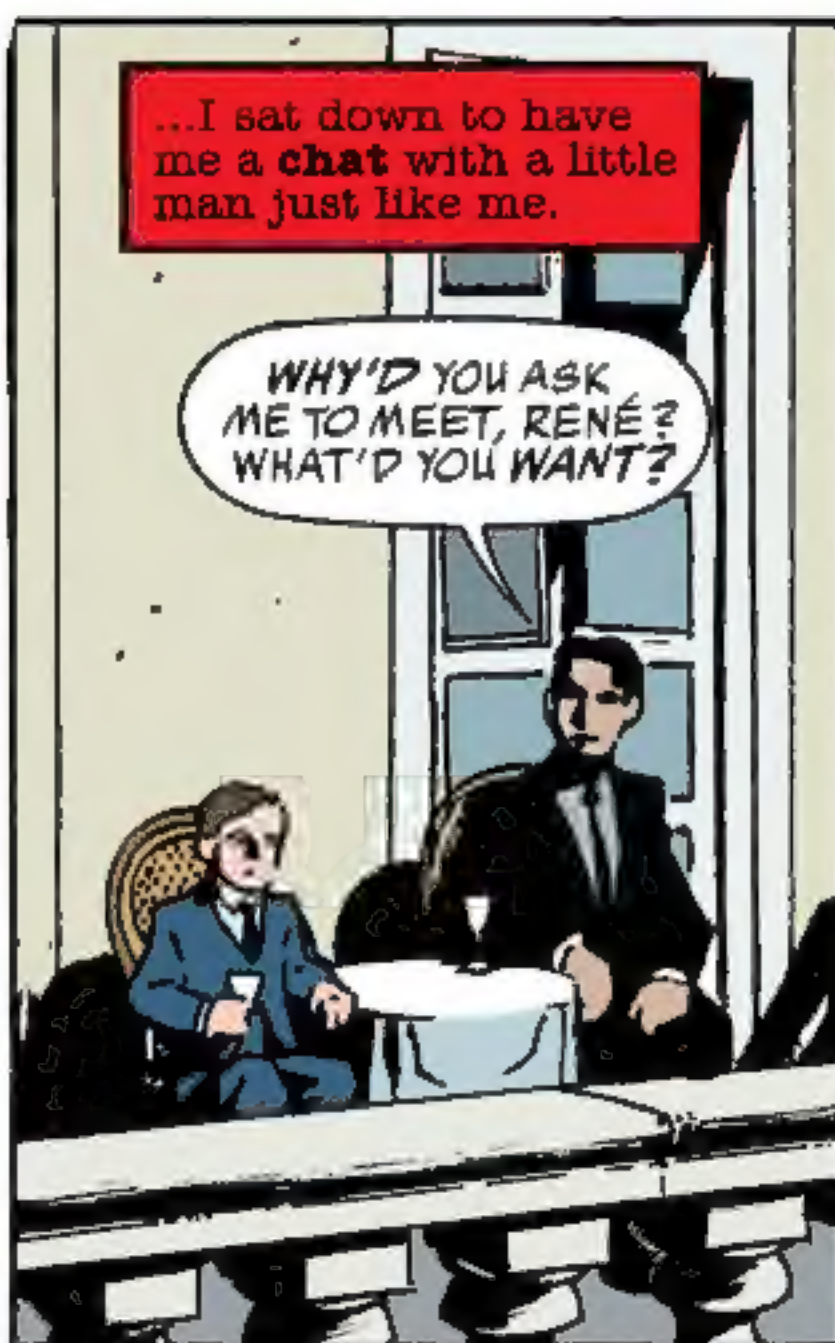
Was it **him**
weakening,
I wonder...

...or **me**
growing
stronger?



Anyway...things led to **other** things...places to people to places.

Vienna again, this was six... maybe seven years gone...



...I sat down to have me a **chat** with a little man just like me.

WHY'D YOU ASK ME TO MEET, RENÉ? WHAT'D YOU WANT?



I KNOW, MONSIEUR CULP.

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID...

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE...



WHAT EXACTLY AM I?

YOU ARE THE SHADE... BUT YOU ARE NOT.

I HAVE LEARNED OF THE EXISTENCE OF ONE SUCH AS ME... A DWARF... WHO WALKED THE STREETS AND USED SHADOW POWERS SUCH AS THOSE USED BY THE SHADE.



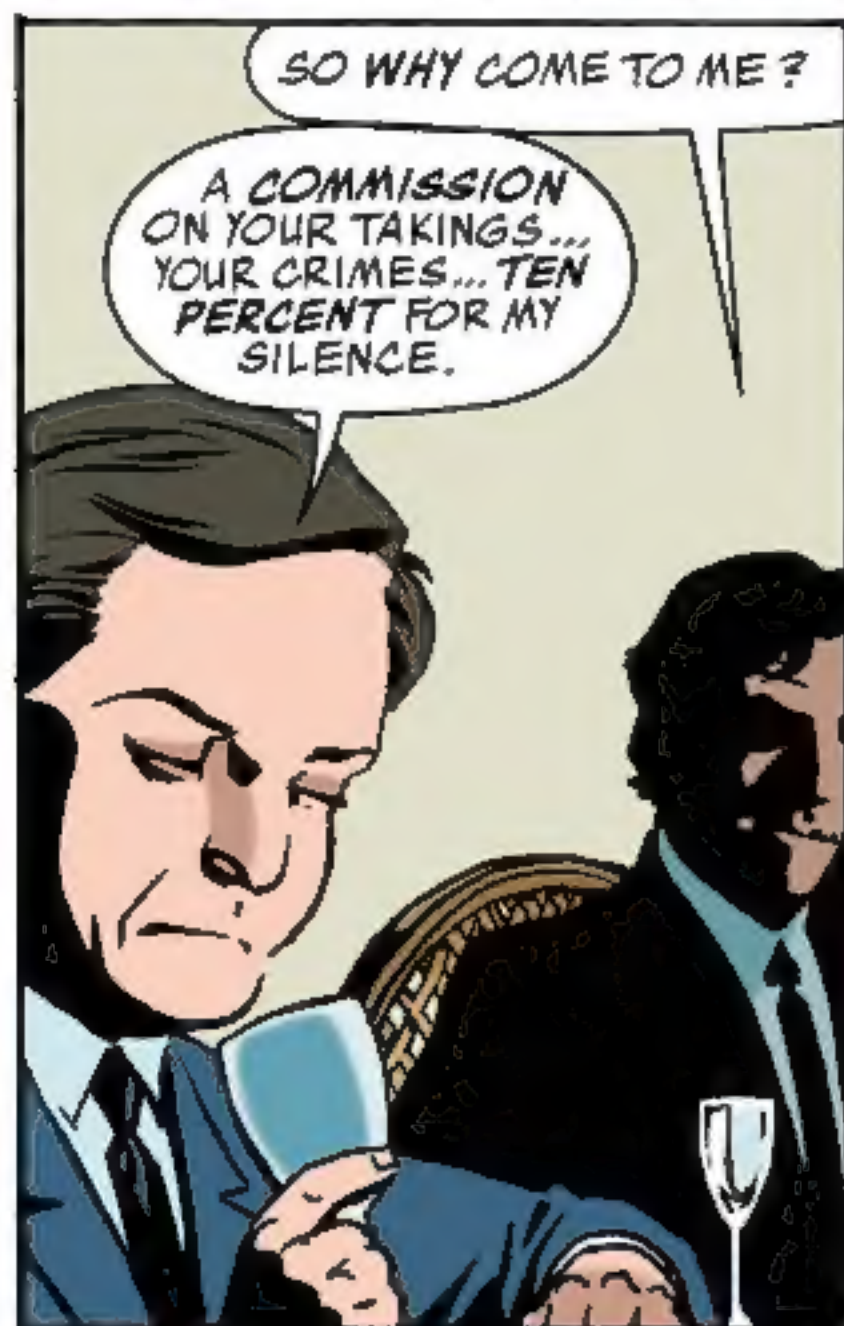
I LEARNED THAT HE VANISHED DURING WORLD WAR TWO.

AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS, I LEARNED THROUGH FURTHER INQUIRY AND MY OWN KEEN DEDUCTIVE ABILITIES.



AND WHY GO TO THE TROUBLE, FOR DOUBTLESS YOU HAVE, TO KNOW SO MUCH?

I AM KNOWN AS THE "POCKET ENCYCLOPEDIA." IT IS MY BUSINESS TO KNOW SO MUCH.



SO WHY COME TO ME?

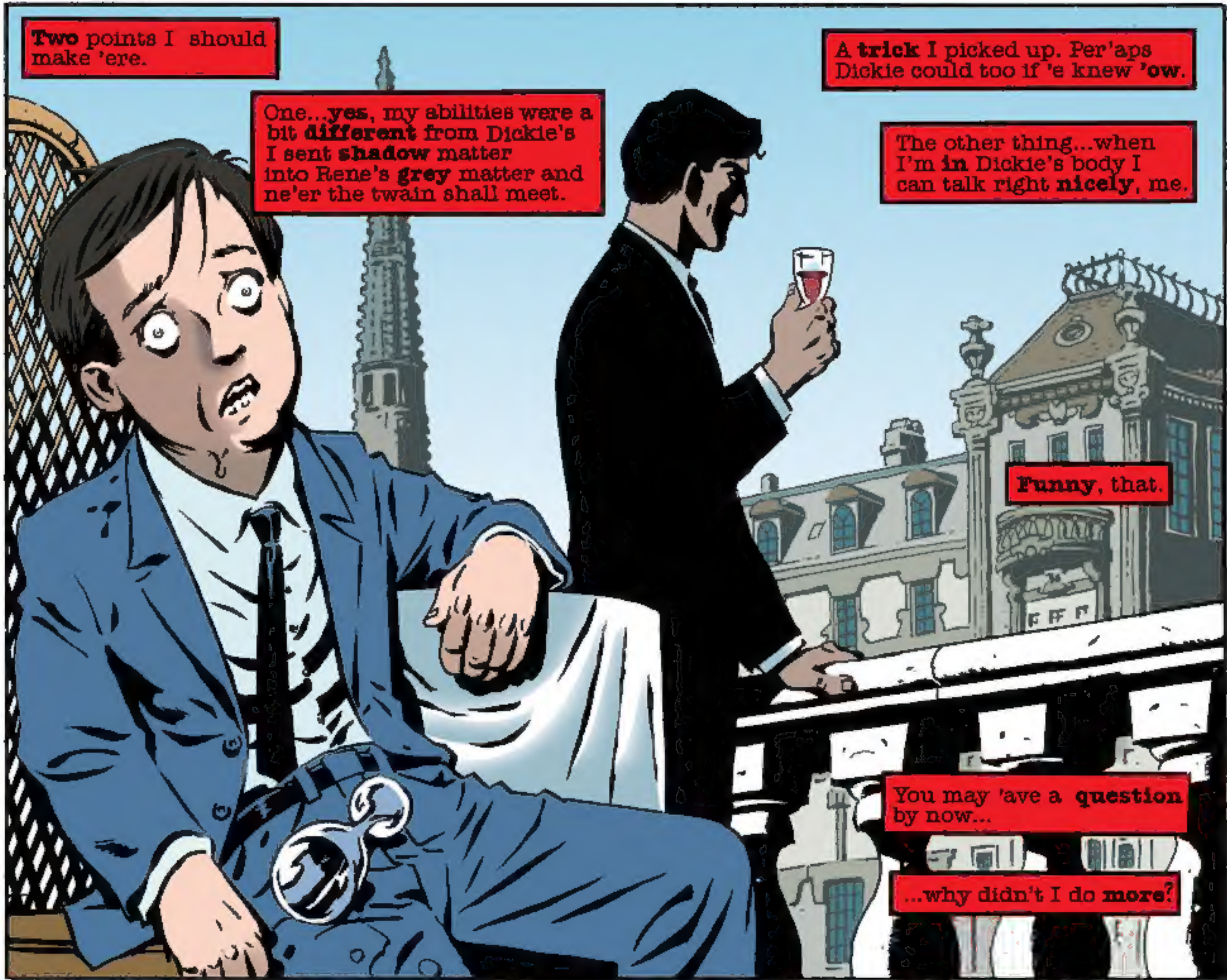
A COMMISSION ON YOUR TAKINGS... YOUR CRIMES... TEN PERCENT FOR MY SILENCE.



YOU KNOW THEY SAY THAT KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLIGENCE AREN'T NECESSARILY BEDFELLOWS.



IT SEEMS THEY'RE RIGHT.



Two points I should make 'ere.

One...yes, my abilities were a bit **different** from Dickie's I sent **shadow** matter into Rene's **grey** matter and ne'er the twain shall meet.

A **trick** I picked up. Per'aps Dickie could too if 'e knew 'ow.

The other thing...when I'm **in** Dickie's body I can talk right **nicely**, me.

Funny, that.

You may 'ave a **question** by now...

...why didn't I do **more**?



In **all** the times I walked the globe as **Dick Swift**, why didn't I **ruin** 'is life? Commit **crimes** so the 'ole bleedin' world was at his 'eels?

Crossed me mind.



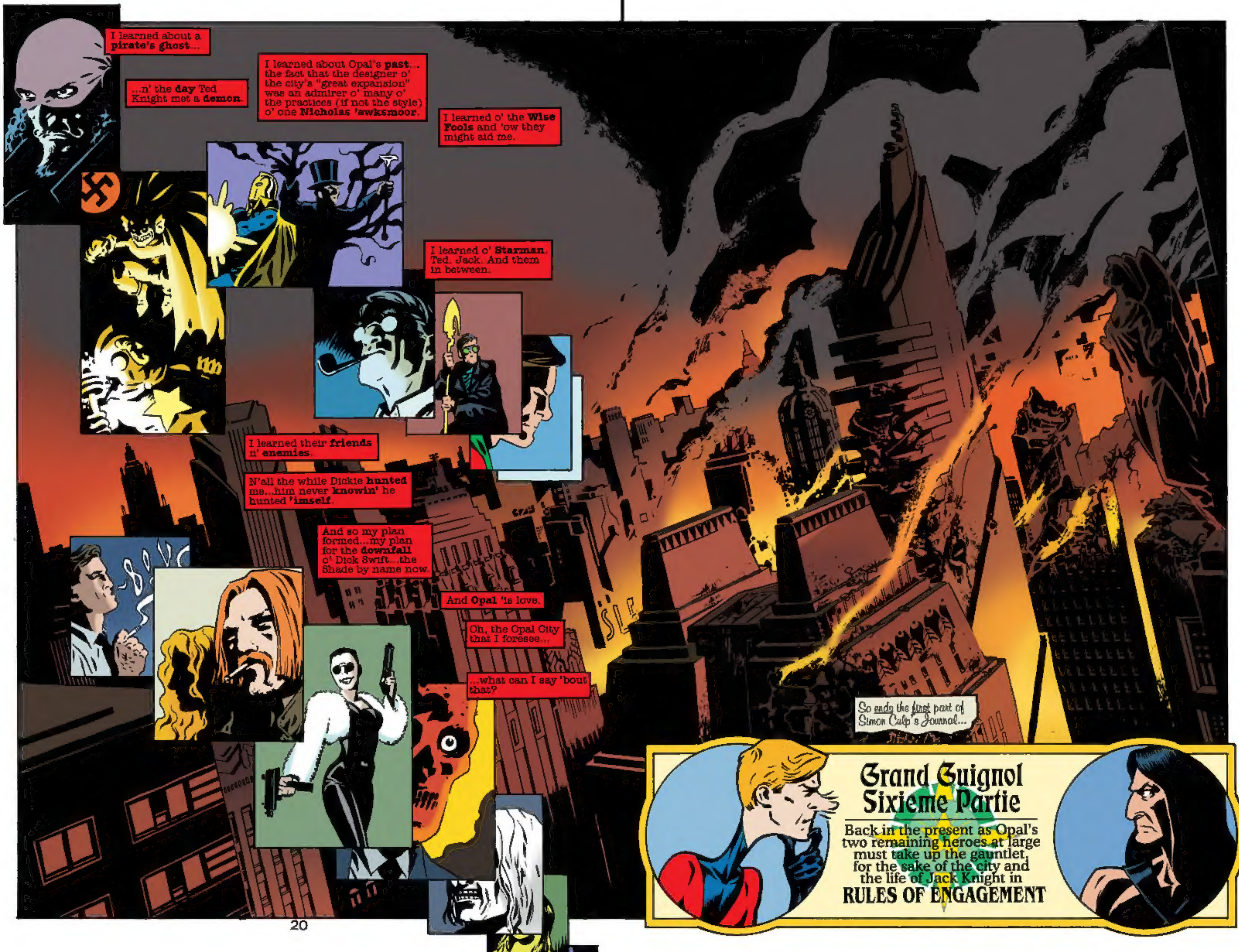
But at the **same** time, knowin' Dickie was me sometime avenue to **freedom**, I couldn't give 'im a fate so 'orrible in case I ended up experiencin' it n'all.

So **instead**, I planned.

I plotted.

I studied.

Took me **time** when Dickie was weak n' I weren't...when I **emerged**. I learned about his life...the **Shade's** life...



I learned about a pirate's ghost...

...n' the day Ted Knight met a demon.

I learned about Opal's past... the fact that the designer o' the city's "great expansion" was an admirer o' many o' the practices (if not the style) o' one Nicholas 'avksmoor.

I learned o' the Wise Fools and 'ow they might aid me.

I learned o' Starman. Ted. Jack. And them in between.

I learned their friends n' enemies.

N'all the while Dickie hunted me...him never knowin' he hunted 'imself.

And so my plan formed...my plan for the downfall o' Dick Swift...the Shade by name now.

And Opal 'is love.

Oh, the Opal City that I foresee...

...what can I say 'bout that?

So ends the first part of Simon Culp's Journal...

Grand Guignol Sixieme Partie

Back in the present as Opal's two remaining heroes at large must take up the gauntlet, for the sake of the city and the life of Jack Knight in
RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP